



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 154

Thursday, September 25, 2008

No. 153

House of Representatives

A Tribute to Ramona Ripston, Executive Director of the ACLU of Southern California, on the Occasion of the Dedication of its new Headquarters Named in her Honor

Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California and its executive director, Ramona Ripston, on the occasion of the dedication of the organization's new headquarters building in Los Angeles. Located in my congressional district at 1313 West 8th Street, the new facility is aptly being named the Ramona Ripston Center for Civil Liberties and Civil Rights in honor of this remarkable woman who has graced the organization's helm for 36 years.

As the festivities get underway to commemorate the ACLU of Southern California's proud 85 years of hard work enforcing the promise and vision of our nation's Constitution in Los Angeles and throughout Southern California, it comes as no surprise that the focus of this grand occasion is also upon Ramona Ripston.

During her lengthy tenure as executive director of the ACLU of Southern California, Ramona Ripston has earned a distinguished record of achievement.

Ms. Ripston was named the executive director of the ACLU of Southern California and the ACLU Foundation of Southern California on September 1, 1972, becoming the first woman to direct the activities of a major ACLU affiliate. She is responsible for all phases of the organization's programs, including litigation, lobbying and education.

During her tenure as executive director, Ms. Ripston has steered the ACLU/SC to regional and national prominence. Under her leadership, the affiliate's staff has expanded from six to nearly 60, and its annual budget has grown to \$6 million. She helped foster ties between the affiliate and some of Hollywood's most prominent figures, including Burt Lancaster, Barbra Streisand, Rob Reiner, Norman Lear, James Whitmore, Camryn Manheim and Rick Nicita. Meanwhile, the ACLU/SC has become a respected voice on crucial issues ranging from freedom of speech and racial equality to immigration, homelessness and abuses by law enforcement.

In August 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* named Ms. Ripston as one of the 100 Most Powerful People in Southern California.

For six years, she served as a member of the California Commission on Judicial Performance. She has been a visiting lecturer for the UCLA Political Science Department, hosted a talk radio program for KABC, and served on the board of directors of the First Amendment Foundation and the Office of the Americas. In 2005, Ms. Ripston was appointed to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Commission by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. She also serves as a member of the national ACLU's Pension Committee and the Endowment Policy Committee.

Ms. Ripston was a founding member of Death Penalty Focus, and was honored with that group's Abolition Award for 2003. In 2006, she received the Rosa Parks Social Justice Award from the Martin Luther King Legacy Association. She was awarded the William J. Brennan, Jr. Civil Liberties Award in 1991 by the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law. The Western Society of Criminology presented her with the 1980-81 June Morrison Founder's Award, given yearly to a noncriminologist who makes an outstanding contribution to justice in the criminal justice system. Ms. Ripston also has been honored by a number of other organizations and entities, including Women in Communication, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the People's College of Law and the Los Angeles City Council.

She has written and spoken extensively on the rights of women – including reproductive freedom – as well as the Voting Rights Act, the rights of the accused, poverty, homelessness, national security, civil liberties, police, the Constitution and the First Amendment, including censorship. She has lectured at a number of law schools, including Harvard, Yale and UCLA.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please join me in congratulating Ramona Ripston on her three decades of outstanding service to the community as head of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. As we celebrate the opening of its new headquarters building, I extend to her, and everyone at the organization, my very best wishes for many more years of success ahead protecting the cherished freedoms we all enjoy in our great nation.